

# China has one of the oldest and most varied cooking traditions in the world.

Cooking styles vary enormously across the country. Each region has its own dishes, customs, method of preparation and mealtimes. People eat rice, noodles and meats with chopsticks. Methods of cooking include steaming, frying, stir frying and hot pot. There are 4 main cooking styles of food in China, namely the *Beijing Style*, the *Shanghai Style*, the *Sichuan/Szechuan Style* and the *Cantonese Style*. Much of the cooking was done in a wok.



Cantonese is, perhaps, the most famous of the food areas. Cooking methods and recipes here have many sauces and are usually fried or stir fried. Noodles and rice are also often eaten in this region. Many Chinese restaurants in the United States serve Cantonese foods.



The Chinese Rice bowl is important to the Chinese society. Every member of a Chinese family has a particular rice bowl.



To the mountainous west, in Szechwan and Hunan provinces, steamy heat and spicy foods are popular. Rice grows abundantly, as do citrus fruits, bamboo, and mushrooms. These dishes are popular with people that enjoy hot spiced foods.



To the east of Hunan lies "the land of fish and rice." Like the west in latitude, it has the added bonus of lowlands for rice cultivation and a rich ocean's edge for fish. The cuisine of the Hunan region uses sugars to make a sweet and sour sauce for many meats and vegetables.

Many Beijing dishes primarily comprise of meat, as a result of eating habits of the royals. For example, the Mongolian rulers during the Ming dynasty favored mutton, while the Qing dynasty rulers preferred chicken and duck. The most famous Beijing entre is Peking Duck.

The northern region of China reaches into the hostile climate of Mongolia -- land of the Gobi Desert and Arctic winter winds. Mongolian influence appears in the prevalence of mutton and lamb -- many in the region are Muslim, so pork is forbidden. The Mongolian hot pot is popular in this region. This is a method of cooking where vegetables and meats are cooked in steaming broth.

